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IN CONCLUSION

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In Conclusion

By

Carlyle C. McIntyre

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Even in these turbulent times there are those whose clearer vision can discern above the confusion of the moral struggle the gleam of the imperturbable stars and to that small brotherhood is this work most fraternally dedicated.

—C. C. M.

PROLOGUE

With a desire to render the ensuing allegory as comprehensible as is possible, the writer has decided to prefix these words of explanation, hoping thereby to reconcile the reader with certain inevitable paradoxes which are inseparable from the poem.

Since the aim of "In Conclusion" is to approximate truth as nearly as is possible and to eliminate the customary illusions, pretensions, and conventions of life the writer has, in the work proper, seen fit to make use of the first person singular throughout. It was Thoreau who said, "We commonly do not remember that it is, after all, always the first person who is speaking.

Perhaps the title of "In Conclusion" is in itself a misnomer, since our conclusions depend entirely upon the experiences of our individual lives, whether those experiences be actual or the interpreted experiences of others, and since life is constantly subject to growth and to the deepening and enriching influences of time.

Be the title appropriate or otherwise it is certain that conclusions, as well as life, are subject to constant change and that as long as life

and experience are existent, just so long shall conclusions be lacking in finality.

Since "In Conclusion" is an expression of the "truth" as realized through the experiences of a life which is probably but half completed, it therefore cannot be taken as necessarily final, even inasmuch as it is the sincere expression of that life.

The writer has endeavored to express the truth as he has been given to see the truth, and this with no intention of casting discrediting reflections upon the equally sincere and equally justified views of those who have been given to see the truth in a radically different light.

Each of us lives in an entirely different world, an individual world which our individual experiences have builded about us, and in these varying worlds are as many varying races of men as there are different individuals in any one of these countless races. No two of us think the same thoughts nor see the same things. As Schopenhauer has said, "Thoughts put on paper are nothing more than footprints in the sand; you see the way the man has gone but to know what he saw on his walk, you want his eyes."

Since this is so we are in no sense justified in passing judgment upon the thoughts of others,

for to do so is to judge of that which we have never seen or known and which, in its entirety, must for all time be realized alone by its originator.

It is true that our individual thoughts are largely composites of the fragments of the thoughts of others and those in their turn are only composites of the imperfectly understood thoughts of preceding thinkers, but into each individual composite there is mingled something that is peculiar to the individual, who is the sole possessor of that particular understanding, and as a consequence, there are no two individuals whose conclusions are in all essentials the same.

We each, therefore, must build an individual castle of thought, though it is true that in so doing we may utilize the wreckage of the thought castles of others, which has been strewn about our feet through the instrumentality of our own Vandal-like misconceptions.

Language at its best is but a poor vehicle for the transmission of thought, as must have been realized by all who have sought to convey to the minds of others some impression pertaining to the deeper phases of life and feeling.

How often we can see, or at least feel, that behind a man's words there is dwelling the ghost

of some deeper conviction which is longing in vain to find expression.

There are few illustrations that will better emphasize this point than will those beautiful lines of Tennyson's,—

“Break, break, break,

On thy cold grey stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.

O well for the fisherman's boy,
That he shouts with his sister at play!
O well for the sailor lad,
That he sings in his boat on the bay!

And the stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill;
But O for the touch of a vanished hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still!

Break, break, break,
At the foot of thy crags, O sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me.”

Where is he who can read those lines and not feel the presence of things unsayable, and who will not hear the fluttering of wings as the soul

of that master singer strives, like an encaged eagle, against the narrow confines of human expression?

Fortunate is he who in her innermost being hears the melodious vibrations of responsive chords which, like the silver strings of the harp of Aeolus, are fanned into soulful symphonies by the passing breath of another's aesthetic conceptions.

True it is that such natures are proportionately exposed to the discords of pain and, as the harp of Aeolus will, when in the grasp of the God of the Tempest, chant the battle march of the elements and in wrangling discontent wail its agonies from the measureless depths of the void of sound, even so will the aesthetic nature at times be swept by chords of bitter agony which in passing would gain but feeble response from the less tense chords of natures unaesthetic.

As Burns has expressed the idea,—

“Dearly bought the hidden treasure
Finer feelings can bestow
Chords that vibrate sweetest pleasure
Thrill the deepest notes of woe.”

But in spite of the necessary accompanying

pain those, "Chords that vibrate sweetest pleasure" are essential to the larger and deeper life, and the discords serve only to emphasize the harmony and the sweetness of the higher pleasures.

Thus it is that the development of the race as well as that of the individual is to be attained only through a stimulation of that faculty which recognizes and appreciates the beautiful in its various forms.

It is through this channel that the imagination or the great awakening power may be revived, and through which the morals of men may be unified and elevated.

It was Victor Hugo who said,—“The beautiful is as useful as the useful.”

But after all it seems that beauty, or at least the appreciation of beauty, must be inherent in the soul of the individual, for beauty, be it in what form it may, can only appeal to the perceiver in as far as he is susceptible to that appeal.

The expression of another, be it verbal or otherwise, is worth no more to an individual than inasmuch as it is able to awaken in him the ability to feel, to comprehend, and to enjoy; in short it is of service only in as far as it is able to show the individual who and what he himself is.

It is the effort of all who strive to express the deeper and more beautiful convictions of life, to submit them in a form which will render them most acceptable, comprehensible and effective and when this has been done, the writer can only content himself with the realization that he has done his best, and leave the reader to glean from his efforts such ideas as he has succeeded in presenting in a gleanable form.

* * * * *

As he who in his search for gold pierces to the roots of the eternal hills, so is he who in quest of truth delves into the heart of things.

Sinking the shaft of his inquiry through the superficiality of established illusion, he descends deeper and deeper through the substratifications of underlying evidences, laboring under constantly increasing difficulties, and supported only by the stimulus of the quest.

About the mouth of every shaft of inquiry is to be found the usual quota of self-sufficient and loquacious blockheads who, with the promptness of ignorance, at once sieze upon, paw over and comment upon each load of detached thought as it is sent aloft by the patient delver in the depths below.

Down in the darkness and solitude of the undiscovered, the inquirer toils earnestly on, caring little or nothing for comments or commenters. Fiercer and fiercer grows the heat, harder and more hard the underlying foundations of thought through which he delves with the determination of the undiscouragable. Distant and more distant the verdant sod of illusion, and fainter, as he works, grows the voice of companionship. Gone is the light of human sympathy and appreciation and still the solitary soul delves valiantly on, never to be satisfied with any treasure other than the innermost heart of the unknown.

Determinedly his pick eats its fiery way into the stubborn depths, and into the eternal stillness of that subterranean realm stabs its ringing interjections.

When lo! with a blinding suddenness the very foundation of the world of things gives way below his feet. With the intuition of an endangered animal he clings desperately to the supporting irregularities of the confining walls and, with reeling brain, peers from his bottomless shaft into the seething and moulted depths of wild insanity.

Here the inherent strength of the man determines his fate. Either Nietzsche-like he plunges headlong into the bubbling void or with stalwart

and almost superhuman stolidity he refuses to yield himself, and scrambling into the suspended bucket ascends from the dangerous depths of the undiscoverable to dwell the remainder of his days in possession of his limited faculties, and to content himself with the blossoms of mystery which, star-like, are scattered over the verdant sod of illusion.

* * * * *

It is not the hope of the writer that all things paradoxical have been eliminated from the ensuing allegory, nor is such his desire.

It requires no very persistent perusal of any particular line of thought to force that thought to retreat like a frightened ape into the jungle of contradiction and paradox. Here the mind must halt while the pursued may, in guaranteed security bury itself in the inaccessible depths of the unknown, unharmed and unreachd by any random arrows of mere surmise which may be sent in pursuit.

Being born cripples we are forced by necessity to accept this swaying reed of reason as a crutch. So long as we confine our rambles to the grassy lowlands of life we may hobble about quite successfully, but the steeper slopes of Olympus are strewn with the broken and discarded crutches

of those who have vainly sought the dwelling place of the gods.

In approaching the conclusion of his essay, "Nominalist and Realist," Emerson has said, "No sentence will hold the whole truth, and the only way in which we can be just is by giving ourselves the lie. Speech is better than silence, silence is better than speech. All things are in contact; every atom has a sphere of repulsion. Things are and are not at the same time—and the like. All the universe over, there is but one thing, this Two-Face, creator-creature, mind-matter, right-wrong, of which any proposition may be affirmed or denied."

The source of reason is mystery and reason when pushed to its ultimate will invariably go to seed in a pod of paradox. Like a meteor, reason appears unannounced from a limitless void of gloom, trails its fiery course for a brief spell through the higher atmosphere of our little world and as precipitately plunges into the gloom again.

The most profound thought-edifice ever builded is no more than a tower of shadows which swims for an interval through the desert mirage of life.

Verily meditation teaches us that all is paradoxical, even unto this thing which we have

termed "thought," and including these perambulating mysteries, which for want of a better name we have called "men."

With this feeble attribute which is "reason" we attempt to measure all about us and subsequently to appraise the virtue of all things, never considering for an instant that this thing "reason" which is our very instrument of measurement is nothing more than a mere supposition, a surmise, an unfounded hypothesis which we have accepted through force of dire necessity.

What a paradox is the unreasonableness of reason, the thoughtlessness of thought!

Since reason is solely a matter of comparison, a judging of things new by comparison with things old, a measuring of things unknown by a scale formed of a combination of things which are supposedly established as facts, it must follow that reason can deal only with such considerations as are in some sense comparable to precedent. The finality, integrity and certainty of all conclusions thus reached are seriously compromised by the hypothetical nature of the factors entering into the process of their deduction.

Since all precedent is in its last sense only supposition it must follow that there is no actually established fact; for a supposition which is

said to be proven through the instrumentality of another supposition can not, in the final sense of the word be spoken of as proven.

As that most astute thinker, Herbert Spencer, has said in concluding his wonderful work on "The Unknowable,"—"He (the man of science) more than any other, knows that in its ultimate essence nothing can be known."

And thus it is through all things, all is fluent, all things are, as far as we are concerned, founded upon mere suppositions which in desperation the mind of man has grasped, and upon which he has builded this curious leaning tower of Pisa which is our society.

Adrift in the void, upon a mere hypothesis, and inhabiting this superstructure of society, man wraps the veils of his countless religions about his eyes and swings giddily on to the realms of He-knows-not-where. He knows not whence he came nor whither he will go, but with an indifference which has in it the characteristics of both the Deity and the fool he bravely deals with the incidents of the present. He thinks, if think he can, that through all of the bewildering web of things he sees a plainly discernable golden thread of purpose, and in the thought is hope, and in hope alone is life.

The only thing that he really knows is that he knows nothing and that all knowledge is mere surmise, and irony of ironies, that this realization is in itself only a super-surmise.

Ye God of mysteries! Why and wherefore!

“I stand amid the roar
Of the surf tormented shore,
And I hold within my hand
Grains of golden sand—
How few! yet how they creep
Through my fingers to the deep,
While I weep—while I weep!
O God! can I not grasp
Them with a tighter clasp?
O God! can I not save
One from the pitiless wave?
Is all that we see or seem
But a dream within a dream?”

—E. A. Poe.

If herein there is a reluctance shown in accepting the trappings and draperies of any of the various established creeds it is through no lack of appreciation of the value of the vital principle of all religion, but because, as 'Thomas Carlyle has said,—“Rituals, Liturgies, Creeds,

Hierarchies, all this is not religion, all this, were it dead as Odinism, as Fetishism, does not kill religion at all."

Now has it been possible for the writer to conceive of a God, an Infinite or a Cause in the generally accepted and personified sense of these terms. The existing God of all time, force and matter can not in his conception of things be shrunk into the picture god of the creeds nor will the wildest flights of a most fanciful imagination enable him to mould into a conceivable form the God that is.

In considering the origin and motive of things the human mind can not intelligently grasp the idea of a beginningless universe nor can it intelligently grasp the alternative idea of an all wise and all powerful creating Cause. In fact the human mind being finite is staggered and prostrated at any attempt to logically deal with the God idea. A man either accepts the God idea, call it what he will, or else he refuses to accept it and in either case his position is indefensible, and any argument advanced in defense of his stand only weakens his position.

With a full realization of the shadow-like foundations which buoy up his consequent philosophy of life the writer accepts what to him

seems the firmer of the two possible foundations, accepts the God idea in a general way and builds thereon.

It is an old and true adage, "The more we know the less we know" and only ignorance deep and dense is positive in its opinions.

Faith is another name for desperation as manifested by small minds. It asserts as truths, beliefs which it can not prove to be facts. Hope is larger in that it deals with possibilities rather than with assertions. Faith is final, bigoted, violently partisan and oppressive, while hope is trusting, broadly catholic and lenient, open to all light and intellectual improvement and above all, free from all dogmatic formulas and restraints. Hope builds upon dreams, calls them dreams and trusts that all is well, faith builds upon dreams, calls them facts and dogmatically asserts.

Philosophy, broadly speaking, must of course embrace all things pertaining to human life and human thought, including the false philosophies of the vanished and fast vanishing creeds. In fact even hope itself, in order to exist, must have some dimly discernable silken thread anchoring it to the ghost of an unrecognized and submerged philosophy.

Like the waxen pond-lily the flower of hope must draw even its most beautiful conception of life and cause from the underlying quagmire of mere thought. In its rise toward perfection it ascends through the malarial waters of earthly experience inch by inch, until at last, bursting into perfected form, all consideration of the environment of its origin is lost in an appreciation of the perfected flower.

Nor is the lily of hope any less a lily because it was conceived in the slime coated silt of reason, among the tangled roots of mistaken philosophies, and forced its waxen beauty heavenward, unsullied, through the polluting waters of human experience.

These things being considered the writer has experienced no little difficulty in attempting to personify Hope, Philosophy, and the Creeds, and to sever, for the time being, that all too evident connecting thread, in order to contrast these phenomena of the human mind, one with the other.

The personified philosophy of "In Conclusion" is, however, that limited philosophy which Schopenhauer had in mind when, in speaking of the intellect he said,—“Its power of comprehension never reaches beyond what philosophers call ‘finite things,’ or as they sometimes say, ‘phenom-

ena,' in short just the fleeting shadows of this world, and the interest of the individual, the furtherance of his aims and the maintenance of his person. And since our intellect is thus eminent our philosophy should be eminent too, and not soar to supermundane things, but be content with gaining a thorough grasp of the world of experience."

It is probable that the philosophy of "In Conclusion" would be more readily recognized if arrayed in the chain armor of Science than when arrayed in the sack-cloth of the sage.

Be that as it may our scientific philosopher and heir to the House of Fact herein meets Hope, the child of Him to whom all Philosophies, all heirs, and all facts are but incidents and in the meeting there is catastrophe.

In advancing the belief that "all that is, is right" the writer has not been blind to the fact that suffering is a dominant factor in life. The soul sickening misery and oppression of the units of humanity have at times born in upon him with paralyzing intensity, but in moments of clearer vision the workings of the Omniscent Will as manifested in the vast scale of things has convinced him that pain in all of its instructive and

disciplinary workings, is but one element entering into a vast and final good.

In his exquisite lament Tennyson has said,—

“And I—my harp would prelude woe—
I can not all command the strings.
The glory of the sum of things
Will flash along the chords and go.”

Nor would the writer imply that the present conditions being “right” are final. Change is the keynote of the universe and finality is a myth. From the primal bog the creature man has dragged his slow way up the slippery grade of development, shedding one by one his brutish traits and ever striving to fan into flame that small spark of soul which has led him hopefully on. Like a beacon in the night the vision of ultimate justice among men has glowed before him and even now is glowing with increased intensity. With ever increasing will and with ever increasing intelligence he presses onward and upward toward the still distant goal of civilization.

One-third lizard, one-third man and one-third angel he bends to the grade; the lights of civilization are in sight; his thews are strengthened by ages of stress and strain, his course has been

ever upward and ever upward it will be, in spite of the element of swamp reptile which has persistently clung to him. The man is gradually dominating the lizard and likewise the angel, whose name is Idealism, is gradually dominating the man.

All that was, was right, in the ascending scale of progress; all that is, is right, for the present instant only; what is to be, will be right though it differ in every detail from the right of today. Progress is invincible and the world does move forward perceptibly. Thus religions, nations, ideals, political philosophies and faiths without end have come and gone to make way for better ones to come, and still man, the central figure, plods steadily on.

In all of the realms of imagination and reality there is nothing that is at once as pathetic and as inspiring as is this great semi-blind, inarticulate, groping brute-man, sullenly plodding up through the ages, slipping backward now and then only to rise and trudge determinedly onward, his heavy half-shut eyes glowing with the fires of an awakening soul and set steadily upon the light of civilization which gleams upon the distant height.

In considering justice as it is manifested in the

universal scheme it is all too evident that the Omniscient Will is little concerned with justice as it applies to the individual.

Right is ever becoming an accomplished fact and in the process are involved many painful procedures which enter as factors in the great final accomplishment toward which the whole universe drives. These procedures being essential to the great master purpose of the universe are necessarily right though we as individuals are at times shown no more consideration than is grain within the mill.

This progress in its development strikes remorselessly at men and nations, sweeps races into oblivion, turns worlds and systems into the discard but ever marches irresistably on to its appointed end.

It is only when the individual willingly loses himself in the cosmic machine and falls into his nitche as an infinitesimal part of a perfected whole that he can hope to view the idea of justice from a proper perspective.

Be he baker, poet, agitator or farmer, let him do his small part in the vast task of living, asking no privilege that he is not willing that all should have, serving and being served and ever lending

his individual strength to the forward urge of things.

When a man has fully realized that honor and common decency demand that strength shall not prey upon weakness, be that weakness physical, mental, or material, then and only then, has that man's mentality risen above the mental horizon of the jungle beast.

Let a man say to himself, "I am willing to fit into the master design of things in whatever capacity it has been intended that we as a race should fit. If the Master Builder has decreed that this humanity to which I belong is to serve but as a roadway over which are to march the sandled feet of better things, then well content am I to serve in such capacity." When a man has reached this realization, that in the cosmic scheme, each and every infinitesimal part is equally important, and without his atom of life and service the whole cosmos would have been an uncompleted thing, then is he willing to be and to serve in whatever capacity shall fall to his lot, and in his heart there will reign a buoyant sense which is stoicism, infused with the illumination of hope.

The poem as a whole is the child of necessity,

as "In Conclusion" has for some time been crying for the privilege of assuming the concrete.

The writer has felt that in this day of crumbling creeds, of discarded philosophies and shattered illusions there is a crying need for some voice to proclaim the doctrine of HOPE; the doctrine of that hope which has stalked boldly down the centuries casting to rearward like outworn garments its tattered and faded creeds and philosophies, that hope which in spite of antagonistic philosophy reigns indomitably in the human breast and which is today the sole religion of the unchurched millions, that hope which knows not defeat and recognizes not reason, but placidly, fatefully leads humanity over the chaotic quicksands of shifting thought toward the final realization of the rightness of things. This doctrine of Hope he has endeavored to proclaim.

P R O E M.

Our hopes are life,
Our thoughts are dust,
If live we would,
Then hope we must,
For hope alone
Has life to give,
And thoughts will die
Where hope will live.

IN CONCLUSION.

I.

Full wearied with the ways of men,
And worn by stress of fruitless thought
Concerning things beyond my ken,
A restful solitude I sought.
I climbed me to a lonely height
That towers beside the surging sea
Where far below the billows fight
In frothing riot wild and free.

II

And there I sat me on the rocks
That overhang the gulf below,
And watched the frightened screaming flocks
Of sea mews, white as driven snow,
Which swim through amplitudes of space
Like thoughts released from mind's control,
In vain attempt to faintly trace
The mystic mazes of the soul.

III

Like thoughts to sweep before the wind
 On steady wing, direct, alone,
To search the pathless sky and find
 New courses through the vast unknown.
And musing thus I looked below,
 Beheld the battle of the seas,
And looking, longed in vain to know
 Of life and all its mysteries.

IV

The truth of things, of time and place,
 The purpose of this mystic scheme
That holds our lives in its embrace,
 The motive of this living dream
In which we act our written parts,
 Nor dare to drop from out the dance
Though weary grow at times our hearts
 Beneath the heavy hand of Chance.

V

I longed to know, and longing, knew
 I had no right to long to know,
Yet willful thought would e'er pursue
 The underworkings of the show;
Like some lost sea bird of the night,
 Would throw herself against the pane
Where gleamed the golden harbor light,
 A beacon through the driving rain.

VI

Or like some spectral form would tread
 The shell strewn hallways of the seas
Where roll the bones of ancient dead
 To time of sea sung melodies,
And forms, undreamed by mortal mind,
 Go shuffling through the amber gloom,
Weird, ghostly shapes that can not find
 Their sea tossed bones a quiet tomb.

VII

And then grim Fancy's tireless way
 Would wend o'er sandy sea-swept plains
Where somber ships ill-fated lay
 Bedraped in swaying rusty chains;
Where casks and chests of tarnished gold
 Are scattered o'er the yellow sand,
The wasted wealth of tyrants old,
 Untouched today by human hand.

VIII

But what to him are gold and ships
 Who seeks alone the truth of things,
What wisdom from the ocean's lips,
 What council in its murmurings?
No signal comes from out the deeps,
 No answer from the surf-swept shore,
But Thought her tireless vigil keeps
 And thinking, questions evermore.

IX

And wrapped in wonder lifts her eyes
 Unto the boundless void of space,
And hurls her questions at the skies,
 And wildly dreaming, tries to trace
The purpose of the swinging spheres,
 The hidden scheme of living things,
But wonder as she will, she hears
 No answer to her questionings.

X

And on the wings of Fancy, flees
 More swiftly than the flight of time,
Through far etherial azure seas
 On up the vaulted skies, to climb
To port so dimly distant placed,
 No roaming dream has e'er before
O'er tides of drifting ether traced
 A trail to its forbidden shore.

XI

Still onward, upward, till at last
 With weary wing the port is gained,
And countless cycling suns are passed,
 But nought of value is obtained,
For stars uncounted drift and dream
 And flash their secret signals o'er
The vast abyss where port lights gleam
 As dim and distant as before.

XII

She sees the countless systems cast
 Within the systems to the end,
But where the sequence ends at last
 No dream of hers can comprehend;
She sees the systems she has known,
 Like wheat from out the sower's hand,
Strewn out across the sky and thrown
 In ways she can not understand.

XIII

And like a baffled bird that tries
 To fight the tempest all in vain,
She turns her on her course and flies
 To shelter in the mind again,
And still the stars swing on their way,
 The tides go streaming out to sea,
And all the chords of nature play
 One ceaseless, matchless symphony.

XIV

And thus my thoughts had gone in quest
 Of aught to quench my deep desire,
Of aught to soothe the wild unrest
 That burned within, a glowing fire,
And worn and wearied had returned
 With drooping wing and sullied plume,
Had brought me nought for which I yearned,
 And plunged me in a deeper gloom.

XV

I heard the surging of the sea
 In slowly measured throbs ascend,
The pulsing of eternity
 Advancing to its endless end,
Till stricken down, a beaten thing,
 A hound that cringes at the feet,
Proud Thought retreated, whimpering,
 Into her kennel-like retreat.

XVI

Nor stirred her, hound-like lying low ;
 With restless eyes that witnessed all,
She watched the hand that gave the blow
 And listened for an unheard call,
Till thought grew madness waiting there,
 Confined, submissive as the brute,
And rising, called in wild despair,
 “Give unto me truth absolute.”

XVII

And lo! a hand was on my head,
A husky voice was in my ear,
And o'er my beating heart was spread
The shadow of an unknown fear,
For spectral forms, diversely dressed
In guises strange, surrounded me
Upon the headland's lofty crest,
Above the wild, complaining sea.

XVIII

A patriarch with grizzled beard,
With toothless jaws and hoary head,
With eyes bedimmed with age and bleared
With years of stressful thought which shed
No light upon the truth of things,
Spoke first of all the ghostly throng,
While I with wildest wonderings
By his weird words was swept along.

XIX

“My son,” said he, “dissolve thy dream,
’Tis but a bubble filled with breath,
Thou art a leaf upon the stream
Which flows but to the land of death.
Thine only life is here and now,
Thou art a toy of Fate’s decree
With ‘Finis’ written on thy brow;—
My name is called ‘Philosophy.’

XX

“I heard you crying,” said the sage,
“A cry I oft have heard before,
The slogan of each passing age,
A cry unanswered evermore,
A cry which ever wildly rings
From out the hopeful heart of youth
To die among its echoings,
‘Give unto me the TRUTH! the TRUTH!’

XXI

“The truth, my son, is but a dream,
A phantom of the Great Unknown;
The truth is but the color scheme
Across the skies at sunset thrown;
The truth is but the shifting sand,
Reshaped by every gust of men;
The clay within the potter’s hand,
Constructed and destroyed again.

XXII

“Yea, even as the sparks will fly
From out the forge’s glowing womb,
And rise into the inky sky
To fade into the ebon gloom,
So truth will ever rise and fall,
And creeds and faiths will ever show
That truth is never truth at all,
As far as minds of men can know.

XXIII

“The hollow creeds are all in vain,
 Their fancied gods have followed fast,
Each one to have its transient reign
 And fade into the endless past,
But minds of men will ever build
 New creeds and faiths where others fail,
And human hearts with blindness filled
 Will pray to gods with no avail.”

XXIV

And lifting up one palsied hand,
 With purpled veins and fingers long,
He pointed to the ghostly band
 And sneered at all the spectral throng.
“Behold,” said he, “the creeds of men,
 The fabled dreams and blind beliefs,
The childish myth of ‘faith,’ and then
 Content you with such vain reliefs.

XXV

“But think you not, my son,” said he,
 “‘That things which you can not conceive
Do not exist eternally,
 For, in the scheme of things that weave
Their varied threads through time and space,
 There is intention, thought, and will,
And though in vain you try to trace
 The great design, it weaveth still.”

XXVI

“The truth herself, in spite of all
 The long parade of passing thought,
In spite of dreams that rise and fall,
 Within the grasp of Fate is caught
And wrapped in robes of gleaming gold,
 Is set upon a lofty throne
To reign in state, and reigning hold
 The scepter of the great unknown.”

XXVII

“Yea, Truth herself, must ever be
 The absolute of things that are;
The ruler of Infinity;
 The motive of each swinging star;
And minds of men will ever strive,
 Will long to reach her shrine in vain,
And withered hopes will oft revive,
 But hopes revived will fail again.

XXVIII

“The mind of man is e’er possessed
 By wildest dreams and vain desire,
Is filled with longing and unrest,
 A fierce, consuming, inward fire
And as the twilight moths will rise
 Toward the torch, by fancy caught,
And deem the flame a golden prize
 Such is the fate of human thought.

XXIX

“But think you will for think you must,
 Though all your thoughts you think in vain,
Though all your dreams but end in dust,
 For thoughtlessness is worse than pain.
You can not hope to bail the sea
 Of truth, nor stem the tide of fact
With tea cups of mentality,
 But better fail than not to act.

XXX

“But when your dreams are dreamed and done,
 The creeds, the prayers, the faiths of man,
When all their cycling course is run,
 They end the race where they began.
And thought will pause and turn her gaze,
 By some strange freak of fancy caught,
Upon the folly of her ways
 And ask in wonder, ‘What is thought?’

XXXI

“A hand that clutches at the gloom
Which shrouds the mystic form of things,
A voice which cries against its doom
And dies among its echoings,
A bleeding fist that mangled falls
Ere yet it jars the close'd gate,
A writhing, conquered thing that calls
In accents most disconsolate.”

XXXII

And, as the sage thus spoke to me,
A murmur from the ghostly throng
Rose high above the surging sea
In one complaining common song;
Around us swept the motley crowd
Of spectres dressed in strange disguise,
With cowl and surplice, veil and shroud,
And all with hollow sightless eyes.

XXXIII

The priesthood of the Great Soudan,
Of Egypt and of far Cathay,
The torture fiends of Hindustan,
Had gathered for the coming fray.
All orders of the fiends of prayer
Had risen from their beds of blood
To battle on the headland there
Above the wild complaining flood.

XXXIV

And charging forth with gnashing teeth,
With frothing lips and demon's glee,
They cursed the skies and all beneath,
And fell upon Philosophy.
But, strange to say, the ancient Sage
Awoke, a giant in their path,
He fought with strength of blinding rage,
And smote them in his heated wrath.

XXXV

I gloried as I watched the mill
And saw the Sage with ready staff
Beat out the lives of creeds until
They gave him way like driven chaff.
There stealthy monks with torture screws
And druids old with cruel knives
Were forced in fiendish war to lose
The final battle of their lives.

XXXVI

They fled before the rising ire
Which glowed upon the Sage's face,
Their one controlling, vain desire
To get them from the fated place,
And like a herd of frightened sheep
They hurled them from the mountain side,
From off the headland's lofty steep,
Into the frothing, streaming tide.

XXXVII

And when the heated fray was o'er
 We thought ourselves at last alone,
And standing on the lofty shore
 We heard the ocean's undertone,
The mouthing of the hungry sea,
 Like some she-tiger wild for blood,
Whose white teeth clashed with savage glee
 About the boulders in the flood.

XXXVIII ·

I watched the face of him who stood
 Beside me on the lonely height,
And read his thoughts as only could
 A kindred soul who sought the light.
I saw the saddened heart of him
 Portrayed upon his furrowed face,
And saw his eyes with woe aswim
 Still mutely question time and space.

XXXIX

Oh! prayerless soul! The void how deep!
How helpless are the hands that lift
Themselves in anguish as we weep,
When blind illusion's curtains shift!
Oh, dream returned! Thy homing sail
Brings not the treasure which ye sought!
Oh, heart of mine, of what avail
This Juggernaut of deeper thought!

XL

And thus oppressed I sat me still,
Nor cared to hear nor witness more,
My heart was steeped in woe until
I longed to leap me from the shore,
While o'er the mountains and the sea
There fell a dark and gloomy shade,
And sadness o'er the soul of me
Her robe of ebon blackness laid.

XLI

But still, beneath the gloom and woe
 There burned a glowing vital spark,
There still were thoughts that would not go
 Nor yield them to the densest dark,
A fire that like some midnight flame
 But glowed the brighter for the gloom,
And o'er my bowing soul there came
 A wild defiance of its doom.

XLII

And looking at Philosophy
 I saw his face grow cold and stern,
His thoughtful eyes were set on me,
 I saw their depths with menace burn.
His gnarl'ed staff was lying by,
 He seized it in his withered hand,
And "blood" was written in his eye,
 A sign that I could understand.

XLIII

I rose me to the coming fray
 With vivid thoughts of witnessed deeds,
With recollections of the way
 He slew the countless charging creeds.
I set upon the waiting sage
 Who chuckled now a mirthless laugh
And, sneering at my puny rage,
 He smote me with his crooked staff.

XLIV

He seized upon me then, as though
 He sought to throw me from the cliff
Into the frothing seas below,
 And chuckled to himself as if
He thought the spinning worlds would be
 Far better off than now, without
A doubter of Philosophy
 To spread infection 'round about.

XLV

But lo! a hand was on my head,
A voice of strength was in my ear,
And o'er my failing heart was shed
A light that burned with lustre clear,
And by my side, encased in mail,
There stood a form whose face revealed
A courage that could never fail,
And "HOPE" was written on his shield.

XLVI

And in his hand he held a blade
Of gleaming steel and pattern old.
The helmet on his head was made
Of burnished sheets of beaten gold.
His stalwart limbs when e'er they moved
Below the mail in which he dressed,
In rhythmic undulations proved
The mighty strength which he possessed.

XLVII

“Take heart O Soul,” he said to me
In accents strange and strongly true;
“Arise and watch and you shall see
How much the blade of Hope can do.”
And holding high his gleaming blade
He charged with laughter to the fray,
And with one sweeping stroke he laid
The Sage across the stony way.

XLVIII

Then lifting high his trusty blade
With foot upon his fallen foe,
This declaration there he made,
“The God of Right has willed it so.
I conquer in the name of Truth
Whose subject I have been from birth,
I conquer in the name of Youth,
Of Happiness, of Life, and Worth.

XLIX

“My name is HOPE. I hold the place
Of envoy from the Master Mind.
I bring unto the human race
The light that Knowledge fain would find
By delving mole-like through the crust
Of mouldy thought, with blinded eyes,
With eyes too filled with earthly dust
To read the teachings of the skies.”

L

And stooping low he caught the sage
And hurled him to the growling sea,
Whose hungry maw with angry rage
At once consumed Philosophy.
I looked at HOPE in silent awe,
Nor dared to speak a fleeting doubt
Concerning that I heard and saw,
So utter was the Sage's rout.

LI

But deep within my soul there thrilled
 A chord that answered to the things
The Sage had said, ere HOPE had killed
 And fed him to the sea that flings
Its ghostly arms about the stones
 And wails like vampires drunk with gore,
In fiendish, hollow, ghoulis tones
 Along the spume-swept, rocky shore.

LII

But like a flood of April's sun
 Too strong for clouds or fleeting rain,
When once his gruesome task was done,
 The face of HOPE was wreathed again
In smiles, so bright that even I
 Forgot the shadows that were hung
Across my soul's beclouded sky,
 And far gloomy curtains flung.

LIII

And HOPE advanced him to my side
Where, stripping off his shield and blade,
He sat him down and gayly tried
To ease the wound the Sage had made.
And sitting thus upon the cliff,
He spoke of things, of time, and men,
Until my heart rejoiced as if
It ne'er would feel a woe again.

LIV

Said he, "I heard while on the height
That towers to rearward of the sea,
The echoes of the fiendish fight
That raged about Philosophy;
I heard the teachings of the Sage;
I saw you lend a willing ear;
At last I gloried in your rage
And, drawing blade, I waited near.

LV

“ ’Twas written in the book of life
That creeds and thoughts should play their part
That living should be made of strife,
Of puzzled heads, and aching hearts,
That man should pass from stage to stage,
From childish hope to creeds of pain,
From blind belief to thoughtful age,
And then from thought to hope again.

LVI

“ And long ago the Master Mind
Alloted to my special care
All gloomy hearts that I could find,
And bade me light His beacons there;
He placed a blade within my hand
So keen that all must fall before,
He gave me strength to wield it, and
He sent me to this Earthly shore.

LVII

“I came in ages long ago,
 Long, long before the budding scheme
Of human life had bloomed to show
 The beauty of its Maker’s dream,
Back where lush grasses stood in rank,
 Knee deep in tepid, slumbrous seas,
And silence reigned o’er marsh and bank,
 Unwaked through dead eternities.

LVIII

“Back on the faded trail of time
 I watched as human life began,
A senseless clot of clinging slime
 In those dark pools silurian:
I followed up the climbing scale,
 With ever ready arm and blade,
Which like some all-determined snail
 Crept slowly up the trying grade.

LIX

“And lo! at last I saw evolved
 A man complete with mind and heart :
I saw the cruder man dissolved
 And marveled in our Maker’s art.
And as some lonely hermit sees
 The blooming of a rose divine
And revels in its fragrances,
 So I received this man of mine.

LX

“I watched with joy the Master Hand
 Reach down with taper, and ignite
The torches of his longings, and
 I saw his face grow tense and bright :
I saw the burning queries glow
 Behind the windows of his eyes ;
And saw his mind awake, and throw
 Its countless questions at the skies.

LXI

“And then I saw that not in vain
 Had been the session of my wait,
That now at last were joy and pain,
 And human hearts would vacillate
From lofty heights of happiness
 To deepest depths of misery,
And in their folly and distress
 My men at last had need of me.”

LXII

“And so through all the fleeting years
 I fight the ghosts of their despair,
I trade them sunshine for their tears,
 And flush their souls of woe and care;
My blade is at their least command
 In doting age as well as youth;
I take each proffered, groping hand
 And place it in the grasp of Truth.”

LXIII

“I hear them crying in the night
 The same old cry forever new,
‘Show unto us a clearer light!
 Point out to us the high and true!’
And seizing on my trusty blade
 I trail them through the inky gloom,
And, finding them, at last persuade
 And lead them from their somber doom.

LXIV

“But fain are men to dwell in need,
 To haunt the dark and dreary ways,
And loath to listen to, or heed
 The voice that speaks of life to praise.
They call for Truth, and then refuse
 The proffered hand that Truth would give,
And in their blinded longings lose
 The light of Truth, and longing live.

LXV

“And you have called within the hour,”
 He said with smile bewreathed face,
“For Truth and superhuman power
 To comprehend all time and space,
And Truth has stood beside you here,
 Her hand has hovered o’er your head,
And yet your heart beat wild with fear,
 Your craven soul was filled with dread.

LXVI

“The Truth, herself, is absolute
 In that the Truth is one and all
In that her precincts constitute
 The all unbounded realms that fall
Beyond the spheres of time and place
 Of mere effect and hidden Cause
And altogether plainly trace
 The mystic beauty of her laws.

LXVII

“The Truth is Master, child, and man,
Is clod and stream and growing thing,
The Truth is all the mighty plan
Through which the countless systems swing,
The Truth is life, is joy, and breath,
The penciled chart, and He who drew,
The Truth is music, woe, and death,
The scanned, and still the scanner too.”

LXVIII

“The Truth is you and even I,
And even still the dreams you dream.
The false is Truth, though you may try
In vain to understand the scheme.
There is no false. Could we but see
The full intent of things we call
‘The false in life,’ it then would be
That we would understand it all.”

LXIX

“But can the bowls upon the shelves,
The spinning clay upon the wheel,
Propound these questions to themselves,
Or ask the potter to reveal
The secrets of his varied arts,
Or bid him tell to full extent
The nature of their destined parts,
The end for which they each were meant?

LXX

“Nor need the sands upon the shore
Decry the fate that has denied
That they should know their goal, before
They yield them to the sweeping tide;
For He, who holds the streaming seas
As helpless bondsmen to His will,
Has watched through dim eternities
Each grain of sand and watches still.

LXXI

“And yet you drifting human sands,
 Before you yield to certain laws,
With weeping eyes and wringing hands
 Decry your fate and curse the Cause
Who sweeps you on to things unknown,
 Nor hears nor cares to hear your plea.
For what advice can crumbled stone
 Submit to All Infinity?

LXXII

“You vainly strive to gain reply,
 You blindly boast in your conceit,
And simple men will ever try
 To hide the fact of their defeat,
But those, whose search for Truth entails
 Their fervent prayers and bowing heads,
Are fools who fish for plunging whales
 With bended pins and cotton threads.

LXXIII

“Like fiery blossoms of the night
The rockets of theology
Have raised their swaying stems of light
Toward the distant Galaxy,
But wearied, ere they well began,
They hung their sprays of crimson bloom
Across the mental dusk of man,
And faded in a deeper gloom.

LXXIV

“The trail from out the distant past,
Is thickly strewn with sticks that lay
A mute rebuke to those who cast
Their glances rearward o’er the way,
And all the restless thoughts of men
That e’er have wandered off in quest
Of Truth, have wandered back again
To know that search is only jest.

LXXV

“For how may Truth deciphered be
 By thought, while thought is yet so small,
While Truth is all infinity,
 The thought, the thinker, one and all?
No, thought is not the scale to span
 That boundless, all unmeasured sky,
Nor is the tea-spoon skull of man
 The bowl to bail its oceans dry.

LXXVI

“All human life is as a spur
 Upon the tooth’ed wheel of time,
That cog but one of all that whirl
 Within the mighty mill sublime;
But every spur upon the wheel,
 As long as all the wheels shall run,
May trust the Miller Man, and feel
 That he is watching every one.

LXXVII

“Nor need the spinning spurs demand
That they should know the Master’s mind,
That metal teeth should understand
The purpose of the meal they grind,
Suffice that they as teeth fulfill
The end for which they first were cast,
Mute subjects of a Master’s will,
For such will be their fate at last.

LXXVIII

“Nor need the spurs refuse to move,
For move they will upon their way,
Though they in vain should want to prove
Themselves above their Master’s sway.
And so, thou Soul, it is with you
Who vainly questions through the years
The purpose that is woven through
The swinging systems of the spheres.

LXXIX

“What need have you to know the cause
Of all that is or yet shall be?
Of what concern to you the laws
That govern all eternity?
And why should you, whose life is laid
Within the hollow of His hand,
Behold the future all afraid
Because you can not understand?

LXXX

“Or why upraise your voice in prayer
To tell Him of the things He knows,
And plead with Him to have a care,
To take advice which you propose?
Or why request that He should move
Or halt His changeless scheme, because
Your finite mind would fain improve
The master purpose of His laws?

LXXXI

“Or why demand that you should call
The Cause by any given name,
While human minds are yet so small
And human words so halt and lame?
Of what avail are written creeds,
Are painted gods and printed prayers,
Since worth depends on worthy deeds
And not on hollow, lofty airs?”

LXXXII

“What though that power which “GOD” implies,
Who drives the suns, like scattered sheep
Across the uplands of the skies,
Has not intrusted to your keep
The secrets of His realm, that runs
Beyond the farthest stars that stray
About the pasture of the suns,
Are you to grumble or to pray?”

LXXXIII

And, like some strong and heady wine
Which wildly races through the brain,
The words of HOPE had flowed through mine,
And cleansed it of mistrust and pain.
My heart was filled with deep content,
And pulsed with love for friend and foe;
My woes were gone, but where they went
I knew not then, nor cared to know.

LXXXIV

And life for me had changed its form,
Like some rare rose in twilight's gloom
Had burst into a velvet storm
Of gorgeous color and perfume,
And in my heart, serene and deep,
There reigned an all-consuming trust,
That He who had my life in keep
Would use me well, for He is just.

LXXXV

I knew Him not, nor cared to know,
 Since He was all and I was nought,
Since He had seen it fit to show
 That I was ever in His thought.
And o'er my helpless human head
 I felt the presence of His hand,
And all mistrust of life had fled,
 Though I could never understand.

LXXXVI

And HOPE, with gentle smiling face,
 Again took up his shield and blade,
And rose him from his resting place,
 While o'er his features brightly played
A wild delight as he perceived
 The vanquished ghosts of my despair,
And knew a heart had been relieved
 Of useless sorrow, gloom, and care.

LXXXVII

“My Soul,” said he, “I leave with you
The cheer of life I seek to give,
The good of life that I would do
For all the gloomy souls that live,
The light of trust in Vested Power,
The firm conviction all is right,
The staunch belief at midnight’s hour
That dawn will follow after night.

LXXXVIII

“I charge you to collect the toll
From all the joys today can give,
To live in heart, in mind, and soul,
The life that every man should live,
To live and help your brother man
To help himself, and so help you,
To live and do what good you can
And then to die when all is through.

LXXXIX

“To die with stalwart strength, and know
That over all the Master Mind
Perceives the progress of the show,
And death is but as He designed,
And trust that good must be concealed
Behind the shadow of the shroud,
And know that sunshine unrevealed
Is sunshine still, behind the cloud.

XC

“For He whose seeming ruthless hand
Bestrips the poppy of its flame,
Who smites the roses where they stand,
And lays the broken lilies lame
Across the clods from which they grew,
Has purpose though you can not see
Nor hope to know the things He knew
When He designed immensity.

XCI

“So die and lay you down to rest,
With human fears and doubts dissolved,
With firm belief that all is best
As in the mystic scheme evolved,
No matter if that scheme demand
That you as one shall cease to be,
That you as one shall understand
No more of all its mystery.

XCII

“And, if to Him who rules, it seems,
That men should play a sleeping part,
Mere ciphers in the Land of Dreams,
A cipher be, with cheerful heart,
And know that He who bids you cease
To comprehend the ways of men,
Can bring you silence, rest, and peace,
And when He wills, create again.

XCIII

“Or if as man in vain would know,
 This death is but a transient pause,
A halt within the moving show,
 In full accordance with its laws,
A readjusting of the scenes
 Upon the curtained stage of time,
A rearrangement of the screens
 To bring about effects sublime,

XCIV

“And man an actor treads again
 A future stage of better things,
Bestripped of robes of Earthly pain,
 And rearrayed in figurings
As brilliant as the gems that gleam
 Where dewy roses bow and blow;
If this perchance is not a dream,
 Then surely death is shorn of woe.

XCV

“But I must wend me on my way
To fight the ghosts of men’s despair,
To turn their mental night to day.”
And speaking thus he left me there.
With springing step he climbed the height
That towers to rearward of the sea,
And from his golden shield the light
Was thrown in showers of brilliancy.

XCVI

And lo! I found myself alone
’Neath sunset skies as red as blood,
The summer day was nearly flown,
The flowing tide had reached its flood,
The wheeling birds had ceased their flight
And settled on the rocks to rest,
The sun, an orb of crimson light,
Was burning in the distant west.

XCVII

And gone was all the phantom throng,
 No sign of warrior, sage or creed,
And though I hunted well and long,
 I found no trace of bloody deed,
No gnarl'ed staff nor broken bones,
 No sod bestained with wasted blood,
But on the cliff the scattered stones,
 And in the sea the moaning flood.

XCVIII

And in my heart there was a peace,
 A deep content, that ne'er before
Had bid my aching heart to cease
 Its useless pain for evermore,
A deep content that smiled at pain,
 That laughed to scorn all childish doubt,
That crushed the ravings of the brain.
 And put all woe to wildest route.

XCIX

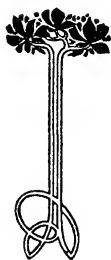
And standing thus upon the cliff,
 I saw the humble haunts of men
Hang out their evening lamps, as if
 They sought to call me home again.
And then and there this vow I made
 That down through all the future years
No fate should bid me be afraid,
 No sorrow blind me with its tears.

C

For God is ever at the wheel
 Which swings the cosmos on its race,
Which heads the universal keel
 Across the time-swept sea of space,
His eye is on the distant goal,
 That mystic port we fain would see,
The final haven of the soul
 In far dim realms of mystery.

L' ENVOY

Long years have gone as years will go,
 Since I have dreamed upon that height,
But time has only served to show
 That wrong is but the seed of right;
And still the stars swing on their way,
 The tides go streaming out to sea,
And all the chords of nature play
 One ceaseless, matchless symphony.



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